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Space as an Artistic Medium (4)

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ASTRONAUTS AS AN ARTISTIC MEDIUM

Abstract

Humans experience many coexistent and contrary needs in relation to any given space. We have a desire for socialising, communicating and being close to others and, in direct contrast, we desire privacy, individuality and opportunities for meditation and creativity. Artists are well placed to translate the human factors of encounters with the world around us and in extreme environments - yet traditionally, this is not a priority pre-requisite for candidates of spaceflight. Abilities in education, outreach, and public relations are however well-regarded attributes. Rapidly developing advances in real-time communications technologies, social networking, broadcasting and two-way audio-visual and biometric data streams from the depths of our oceans, across our planet and beyond add to the expectation that space-farers will translate their experience in numerous ways. Participation in public and immediate communication of experience in addition to the continuing commitment and expectation to publish, present and relive the experience over-and-over for those of us who will never have the chance to live through such adventures, is almost 'part of the job description'. For some astronauts, aspects of their experience are immortalised in film, theatre, radio and music, while for others, it remains private, personal and yet, they often continue public life and service, as national heroes and leaders giving speeches, interviews, workshops and appearances much like rock-stars. Inspired by recent conversations with Astronauts providing insight into the performative public life post-space mission, this paper outlines a proposed new collaborative space-art project which examines the societal and political implications if we are to acknowledge our most remote envoys of human spaceflight as an artistic medium.